

# LESSON ESSENTIALS

## CHRISTIAN LIFE AND WORLDVIEW

### LESSON 9: WHAT IS WORSHIP?

A dictionary definition of worship says it is the feeling or expression of reverence and adoration for a god, and it is to show reverence and adoration for a god, showing honor with the use of religious ceremony. Is that a Biblical definition of worship? How does the Lord mean for His people to worship Him?

The Ten Commandments make it very clear that the Lord intends for us to worship Him only. He tells us to have no other gods before Him and to not make images that we might worship in His place. But if that is how not to worship, then what is the correct way to worship the Lord?

Luke 12:34 gives us one way to evaluate our worship. Speaking of treasure and money, Jesus says, “Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” How we spend or hoard our finances, our resources, and the items we value indicates a lot about whom, or what, we love and worship.

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For centuries, wholehearted believers have been wondering exactly how to appropriately worship God and to honour Him as He deserves. Moses built a Tabernacle and took great pains to adorn it exactly as the Lord required (Exodus 35-40), Jacob built an altar to the Lord at the “gate of Heaven” (Genesis 28), David wanted to build a temple for God (1 Chronicles 17), a woman poured expensive ointment on the feet of Jesus in worship (Mark 14), the Woman at the Well asked Jesus where she should worship Him (John 4:20-24), and the angels do not cease singing praises to the Lord in His throne room (Revelation 4). People are born to worship God!

However, in this fallen world many people turn their gaze away from the Lord and stop worshipping Him. Often non-believers will say that they don’t worship any god. That is simply not true. We are all always worshipping something. Determining what or who it is that we worship is an important undertaking. It could be our family, our possessions, our health, our reputation, our job, or ourselves. We need to get our eyes off of these lesser idols, and to get our focus back on the one true God, and to worship Him alone.

Judging by the definition with which we began this lesson, it might be hard to identify if you are worshipping something or someone other than God. Thankfully, the Bible doesn’t leave us guessing about what worship looks like.

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Some may say, “I live a good life and I obey the commandments as much as I am able. I am worshipping God.” However, in speaking to the Pharisees, Jesus quoted Isaiah, saying, “This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me; in vain do they worship me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.” (Matthew 15:8-9). The Pharisees thought they were worshipping God by living a moral life and by teaching others to do the same. But Jesus knew their hearts, and their outward actions did not impress Him. Our motives behind our actions are also an indicator of the trueness of our worship.

The apostle Paul makes the definitive statement in his letter to the Romans: “I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of

God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.” (Rom. 12:1-2) This is the most broad and helpful definition of worship. Here we see that our whole lives -- everything about us -- is to be used as a daily, living sacrifice and offering of worship to the Lord. Paul mentions our bodies, our minds, and our actions specifically, but the wording is broad enough to encompass aspects of our lives like our speech, our thoughts, and our decisions.

This definition is so helpful because it makes worship about more than singing songs and praying and reading our Bibles. Of course those are beautiful and powerful ways to worship God and we will be blessed as we do them! But, as with the call to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength, this call to worship engages all of us as well.

When we limit worship to singing a song to God at church or listening to a sermon preached on the radio, we limit our ability to worship God fully, and we open ourselves up to temptation to worship other things as they come up in our day. However, when we acknowledge God in all things, when we are grateful to Him in all things, then we find we can worship God with all things, like our work (Colossians 3:23-24) and even our rest (Psalm 4:8)!

Worshipping God is about delighting in Him, praising Him, using the gifts He has given for His Kingdom work, longing to honour Him with everything you have, and spending time, energy, and resources for His sake with joy.

While it can be very humbling to realize that you’ve been worshipping someone other than God, it is immensely helpful to make the realization, to confess and repent of it, and then to turn your affections, your attention, your resources, and your heart back to the one true God who alone is worthy of our worship.

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## IN REVIEW

- Worship is more than singing and praying (although it is also those things).
- Worshipping God is a whole-life sacrifice, living every moment for His glory and in His name.
- No other god could ever truly satisfy the longing in your heart to worship. Only God is truly worthy of or worship!

## HAVE YOUR SAY

- Looking at your life, where do you spend most of your time, energy and resources? Are you spending them on the Lord and on His work for His glory?
- How would you have defined worship before reading this lesson? How has this lesson helped you broaden your understanding of how to worship the Lord?
- What steps will you take today to refocus your thoughts and affection on the one true God?

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